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LETTER DATED 3 NOVEMBER 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 31 October 1997, addressed to you by His Excellency Dr. Blagoj Handziski, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, concerning the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force. I should be grateful if you would bring the contents of this letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Naste CALOVSKI
Ambassador

97-29809 (E) 031197

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Annex

Letter dated 31 October 1997 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia addressed to the Secretary-General

Allow me to present my compliments, and state our views in connection with the need for extending the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) stay in the Republic of Macedonia after 30 November 1997.

In your last report, presented on 11 August 1997 (S/1997/631), pursuant to Security Council resolution 1110 (1997) of 28 May 1997, the facts about the composition, deployment, strength and mandate of UNPREDEP, until then, are stated realistically and objectively.

Particularly important we consider your remarks that "it is evident that the situation in the country has been and still is intimately linked to the overall situation in the region, in particular at its borders. However, the host Government's relations with its neighbours have continued to strengthen, as have its relations with the other members of the international community. In addition, the country's active participation in a wide-range of international organizations and programmes, including the Partnership for Peace programme of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) PHARE programme, are further signs of its enhanced international standing and capability" (S/1997/631, para. 21).

However, considering that you too, as stated in paragraph 23 of your report, agree that "the international community's involvement in the region will be necessary for some time to come, and given the request by the authorities of the host country to maintain an international presence ...", and that by this letter we renew that request, I would like to inform you of the most recent developments in the region.

They, unfortunately, support our argument that the stay of the UNPREDEP mission in the Republic of Macedonia should be continued after 30 November 1997:

- The rather intensive tensions in Montenegro, following the completion of the presidential elections there, could be a new source of destabilization of the region. Namely, the commitment of the new President to equal treatment of Montenegro as a federal unit of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, is being interpreted by some political forces in the Federation as an attempt for secession. This issue has been present ever since the days of the dissolution of former Yugoslavia. The different interpretation of that dissolution and the unresolved complex of issues and problems relating to it, have caused and still cause serious differences and tensions between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other States - equal successors. That, certainly derives from the interpretation of official Belgrade that the dissolution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has come about by forceful secession of the four federal units, rather than as a result of their separation from the Federation established by free will, a fact well recognized by the international community;

- The Republic of Macedonia shares the concerns of the international community about the developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina resulting also from the slow implementation of the Dayton Accords, especially the civilian part. Regarding these developments, as well as the very implementation of the Dayton Accords, between the leaderships of the Bosnian Serbs there is disagreement and division, which, by themselves, pose a source of destabilization.

Though the international community has invested enormous efforts for the stabilization of the situation and there have been some positive results, as for example in the organization of the local elections, we believe that the basic generators of the crisis are still functioning and that there is still no guarantee that after the eventual withdrawal of the Stabilization Force (SFOR), in June 1998, the conflicts will not recur. Thus, the issue of the spilling over of these eventually renewed conflicts towards the south, also remains open;

- The still unresolved Kosovo issue now creates even greater tensions than those existing over the past. Particularly worrying are the illegal transfers of weapons from neighbouring Albania, and the clashes between illegally armed Kosovo Albanians and the representatives of the authorities there, that have taken place over the last several months. Not less worrying are the announcements for continuation and permanent holding of demonstration by the students - Albanians, of the University of Pristine.

We salute the efforts of the international community to encourage both sides, official Belgrade and the Kosovo alternative, to engage in dialogue and to reach a peaceful solution of this issue. However, as you know, on that plan no concrete step has been made and this open issue is, and can be, the most serious generator of overall crisis in the region;

- The new Government of Albania invests great efforts for the stabilization of the situation in the country, for restoring the public peace and order, for collecting the looted weapons, and on that plan there have been positive results, but they are still far from being satisfactory.

It is evident that the leadership of neighbouring Albania is not in the position, by its own potentials, to restore the police authorities and the armed forces, and especially the border units. This is the reason why our mutual border has not been guarded from the Albanian side, which has resulted in an increased number of illegal crossings of the border by large groups. This problem grew particularly complicated with the attempts of gangs of criminals, released from Albanian prisons, to establish channels for the illegal transfer of looted weapons to, and through, the Republic of Macedonia. This has caused a number of heavy incidents with our military border units and police forces, but also incidents with the representatives of UNPREDEP, at some of the observation points along that border.

Encouraging is the fact that the current Albanian leadership is aware of this situation but its inability, thus far, to establish a normal regime at the border portends that this situation could last for a longer period.

We salute the efforts of the international community to assist the Albanian authorities in the re-establishment of the police and military authorities and, this way, in the establishment of a normal regime at our mutual border.

The Republic of Macedonia, within its capabilities, has continually extended humanitarian and other kinds of relief to neighbouring Albania, as for example by putting at its disposal all the transport corridors and airports for the arrival of international relief to that country and by the organization over several months of the customs service for it.

One of the priorities of our Armed Forces, which are developed according to the concept of a small but efficient army, is the securing of the territorial integrity and the guarding of the borders of the State. In carrying out this duty the Armed Forces have had an outstanding cooperation with UNPREDEP, thus contributing to the stabilization of the situation at the northern and western borders and to the very success of the mission.

- In spite of the obligations undertaken pursuant to the Agreement on the regulation of relations and promotion of cooperation between the Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (S/1996/291, annex, appendix), and in spite of the fact that the inter-State border has been defined and existed as an inter-republic border within former Yugoslavia since 1944 until our gaining independence, the Yugoslav side has continually posed reasons for delaying its marking.

Nevertheless, we continue to invest efforts to end the process of marking the inter-State border. However, from the Yugoslav side, so far there have been no concrete steps on that plan, which further complicates the situation along the mutual border.

These assessments of ours, of the current political-security situation in the areas to the north and to the west of our borders, speak of the fact that the sources of destabilization of the region, and of my country for that matter, because of which the UNPREDEP mission was originally deployed, have not yet been eliminated.

It should be taken into account that these sources of instability require a longer period to be resolved.

But, we can conclude that there has been progress in devising initiatives and in strengthening the international community's engagement for the gradual overcoming of these sources of destabilization.

The further presence of UNPREDEP in the Republic of Macedonia can be of decisive importance for the success of these initiatives, since the mission has permanently acted as a factor of deterrence and does have a mandate conducive to the achievement of their goals.

We salute the progress on the plan of the transformation of the region into a region of lasting peace, stability, security and cooperation, resulting from the joint initiative of the countries of south-eastern Europe which are full

members of the Euro-Atlantic security structures or committed to their sooner integration in them.

Should, over the following year, the initiatives of the international community to resolve some of the aforementioned open issues, by way of dialogue, begin to give results, we expect that there will be a more significant progress in overcoming these sources of destabilization of the region. The presence of UNPREDEP until the end of that period, which could extend over the following 12 months, is instrumental for this purpose.

Considering all of this, we believe that the extension of the stay of UNPREDEP in the Republic of Macedonia is necessary for such a period, with the current mandate and composition.

(Signed) Blagoj HANDZISKI